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REVIEW ESSAY / NOTE CRITIQUE

Globalization and the New Modes of Activism

Peyman Vahabzadeh

Ronaldo Munck, *Globalization and Social Exclusion: A Transformationalist Perspective* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press 2005)
Marjorie Mayo, *Global Citizens: Social Movements and the Challenge of Globalization* (Toronto and London: CSPI/Zed Books 2005)
Janet M. Conway, *Identity, Place, Knowledge: Social Movements Contesting Globalization* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing 2004)

THE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE pertaining to the issue we nowadays conveniently, and loosely, call "globalization" is well established and vast. In exposing, quite judiciously, the various aspects of, and injustices caused by, the existing pace of global capitalism, however, such literature remains in many cases also vague, inconsequential, overly descriptive, ideologically rigid, and unable to provide rigorous theoretical grounds for understanding the issue. Numerous pages are dedicated to documenting the effects of the expansion of capitalist systems around the world. Numerous pages record both local and international movements and resistances against this phenomenon. Volumes supply policy criticisms on various state, supra-state, inter-state, or corporate levels. Yet, the foundational works that would potentially contribute to the modes of activism against the injustices manifested through various processes of transnational capitalism become harder to find despite the growing number of titles, which, ironically, tells us something about the marketability of books on globalization.

Peyman Vahabzadeh, "Globalization and the New Modes of Activism," *Labour/Le Travail*, 59 (Spring 2007), 241-254.

The above statements may be deemed generalizations. However, by looking at three recent studies of globalization and social movements, what follows will hopefully succeed in showing precisely how the descriptive trends are at work in the aforementioned body of literature, although each of the three works discussed here makes a contribution to bringing the various aspects of life under the global capitalist system to the fore.

Globalization and Social Exclusion

Ronaldo Munck's *Globalization and Social Exclusion* consists of eight equal-in-length chapters which aim at developing the thesis "that social exclusion — all the ways in which people are excluded from the necessities of life — is the necessary social counterpart of globalization." (ix) After clarifying what he means by "social exclusion" and linking it to globalization and the spaces it creates, the author goes through a systematic — and nowadays standard and expected — presentation of the various kinds of exclusion — gender, race, and class — in order to deliver the reader to his thesis. Against the dominant discourse of our time that relies on a certain naturalistic discourse — and leaning extensively on the work of Karl Polanyi — Munck seeks to prove that there is nothing inevitable about the existing trends in the internationalization of the market. (5) In our time, of course, there abounds the media propagation of the idea of the economic inevitability of globalization, while its ideological "naturalization" portrays this process as a historical one. It was not long ago when Friedrich von Hayek advocated the idea that the patterns of the market create a full-fledged model for social development and organization. Munck shows how, with the international economic expansion of capitalism, the states have become the agents of globalizations (9) as they submit to the overwhelming drive of transnational corporations for eliminating trade barriers and succumb to free-trade pacts and the subsequent deregulation of national economies and privatization of public services. The globalization game, expectedly, is not played in the same way everywhere and in this game there are a few obvious winners in Europe and North America (thanks to their historically advantageous position), and Japan, and many losers who tag along in this process of disparity. Since the Seattle protest of 30 November 1999, Munck argues, there has emerged a global bottom-up resistance against the top-down, one-sided governance of free-trade capitalism. (18) He returns to the significance of anti-globalization social movements in the concluding chapter.

Munck then attends to what constitutes social exclusion which is "defined as a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political process, access to employment and material resources and integration into common cultural processes." (22) Globalization, it is asserted, has created a situation which we can call "global social exclusion" (25) but this does not merely reflect the disenfranchisement of the poor (a relatively conservative concept), but an active process of the allocation and dis-

tribution of spaces along the lines of class, race, and gender. Munck is articulate about the global processes — as often reflected in World Bank policies — that lead development to poverty, despite the prevailing claims to the contrary. Often, in their remedial mode, dominant institutions of globalization launch programs involving poverty reduction and inclusion, programs that try to conceal the "exploitative nature of that inclusion" (31) because these programs are parts of the purposive, developmentalist project of global capitalism. As such, integration and inclusion go hand in hand with social exclusion. (33) A good example is the structural adjustment programs and their discriminatory biases (as regards gender and race) in terms of the social groups these programs aim at integrating. (48-49)

One of the more promising chapters in this book is the one that reconfigures the question of social exclusion in terms of space allocation. Drawing on the work of Manuel Castells, Munck looks at the mega-cities of our time as the microcosm of global world order because it is here that the riches and miseries of global capitalism are manifest in one place. It is in these cities where one can observe the permeation of global trends. (61) These mega-cities hold a disproportionate share of global corporate power as well as a disproportionate share of the disadvantaged. What is significant about the "global city," therefore, is the fact that it is "not only a place — a site in strategic global circuits — but also a contested social space where the 'politics of place' take priority and become the axis for a new dynamic urban politics." (65) On the other hand, though, social exclusion in this age has also taken on regional proportions as exemplified by Sub-Saharan Africa. As usual, in the neo-liberal discourse of the IMF and World Bank, the blame is placed on the victims' falling behind the developmental pace due, allegedly, to Third World traditionalism and nativism. Nonetheless, such cases as Argentina's economic meltdown in 2001 support the precarious nature of the celebrated grand, but short-sighted, plans of global integration into the capitalist system. (73)

Gender, race, and class are the three (and fairly textbook style) categories, each forming the theme of a chapter, through which the author probes the issues of equality and exclusion. Mainly, his argument is that globalization produces inequality through the exclusionary processes that — by redistributing the social spaces according to the economic requirements of the global capitalist system — deprive certain women, minorities (racial, ethnic, immigrant), and lower or working classes from social integration. Identifying the crossroads and overlaps among such categories is empirically useful for showing the extent of exclusion. The prominence of the service sector, for instance, shows how labour is organized around low-paying service jobs that favour female workers — a process aided by the cultural biases that see in women certain labour abilities and by the dual-earner family becoming the norm. (82-83) No wonder, then, that the feminization of work oftentimes translates into the feminization of poverty. (86) Moreover, the underground or informal economies of the global sex trade or the nanny phenomenon also enjoy the fruits of a gendered division of labour. (90) Likewise, the colourization of poverty attests to

the regional distribution of social exclusion. Racial divisions as well as the immigration of labour serve global capitalism in that they provide access to cheap labour where either labour laws are often non-existent (Asia or Africa) or such laws are reserved for the unions (which themselves are historically organized along the racial divide). Finally, class division remains in effect around the world, despite the process of "uplifting equalization" in Europe. (126) With the notion of class there comes the measure of what constitutes poverty — a problem the author frequently raises throughout the book. (130)

The book reveals some fundamental assumptions in the concluding chapter. By drawing on Polanyi, and also casually and rather inconsequentially on Gramsci and Foucault, Munck reveals eventually his "transformationalist" approach which basically means placing social movements at the centre of anti-global capitalism — a point that is only raised in the last six pages of the book. What is hoped, in the end, is to "re-embed market in society" as Polanyi phrased it. (145)

Munck's book is accessible and a useful text for students and non-students. It explicates the many connections one needs to be cognizant of in understanding the issues of globalization and social exclusion. As a reader-friendly text, though, the book in many cases falls into simplifications. One section in Chapter 5 which deals with "global feminism" reads like a textbook presentation of the various strands of feminism and has no organic relationship with the rest of the work. The book's tendency in simplifying various inequalities under three convenient and nowadays politically correct categories of inequality (class, race, and gender) seems problematic. The issues of indigenous peoples, for example, cannot be reduced to race, as they are about the alternative and supposedly anachronistic modes of life (economic activity as well as social organization) in a time when the global capitalist economy does not recognize such alternatives and is intent upon tapping into the natural resources of the indigenous peoples. So the indigenous issue, while involving racial discrimination and class inequality, is really about whether our capitalist and state systems allow self-governing pockets of potentially (but not necessarily) anomalous modes of life. Moreover, in my judgement, the author makes a grave mistake in identifying the rising Islamist (not "Islamicist," as he calls it) movements as resistance against the hegemony of the global capitalist system (114) by trivializing the disastrous consequences of such movements for democratic social movements and human rights in the Islamic countries (and elsewhere) and by disregarding the fact the Islamic movements, should they rise to power, will be no different from any good capitalist regime of our time. I see it as an outsider's generalization when the author regards the presence of millions of Muslims in Western Europe as a "strong political force based on the development of a common immigrant political identity." (114) Such a "common identity" is always a unified but precarious reaction to the decisions of states (e.g., anti-immigrant laws) under given circumstances. Such statements simplify serious ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian tendencies amongst Muslim immigrants.

In examining the central theme that global capitalism has led to increased inequality and social exclusions of sectors of society, the book remains inconclusive. In most cases, it cannot clearly support the idea that various exclusions are caused, or even exacerbated, by global capitalism. In order to support the central thesis of the book "that social exclusion — all the ways in which people are excluded from the necessities of life — is the necessary social counterpart of globalization," (ix) the author needs stronger empirical evidence — and better command of the application of statistical methods — than suggesting, for instance, that "absolute poverty worldwide may have declined since the onset of globalization, but the data are at least controversial." (46) Also, with respect to alternatives to neoliberalism it remains unclear, despite the allusions, (129) whether the author advocates a return to nationally bound welfare state economies, in which case he needs to make an argument for it.

From time to time, loaded terms come rhetorically to his aid in the absence of substantive arguments. For example: "This is clearly not balanced, organic, and sustainable development of a national economy" (129); or, the "crucial question today is whether society can regulate the free market in the interest of humanity or not" (145); or, the "best arguments for paying attention to the world polity are ethical and moral." (145) Statements like these reveal the author's assumptions and imply a corrective view that holds the essence of humanity as naturally and morally good and the present state of world economy as lost innocence, an economic impulse that has gone astray and now needs to be returned to the right path. I cannot accept these views, not because I do not share them (I strongly do), but because they remain extraneous to the logic of the study. Such views are added on because the author cannot work out an immanent criticism of the phenomena under study.

Also controversial and unsubstantiated is his claim, following Polanyi, that we need to "re-embed market in society," (145) as if in a romanticized, innocent past, society and market used to live symbiotically and happily together — which means actually that society was in charge of the market. Let me work through the logic of the Marxian philosophy of history to elaborate. In *The German Ideology*, Marx argued that with the division of labour and the resulting alienation of individuals from their work, human society as the sum of interdependent parts came to an end — a proposition that might imply Munck's claim about the former unity of market and society. But one also needs to recall the first volume of *Capital* where Marx drew on Aristotle's distinction between *oeconomic*, as the art of gaining a livelihood, and *chrematistic*, or the skill of trafficking goods and money. For Marx, this attests to the age-old division of use and exchange values before the time when this division could arrive at its (final) capitalist stage. This civilizational schism is indeed at the heart of the dis-embeddedness, if you like, of market and society — a process that had already, however initially, started over 25 centuries ago. In short, the golden age where market and society were one had never existed after the emergence of agricultural civilizations and city-states and even the evidence that hunger-gatherer

societies treat the trade and social use of goods as one depends on conflicting anthropological evidence.

But with respect to what is at the centre of this review essay — the question of social movements and activism in combatting the forms of social exclusion (gender, race, class) that result from global capitalism — Munck's work leads up to the essential role of social movements, but only in the last few pages of the book. The link between social exclusion and social movements is an assumed one: it is based on the assumption that if people find themselves subjected to injustices, they will rise up against them. This "naturalistic" and reactive view glosses over a huge divide between a mode of existence and consciousness of it, on the one hand, and socially meaningful action, on the other. The issue is far more complex than can be addressed here. Suffice it to say that the very fact that Munck raises the issue of social movements attests to the fact that resistance does not reactively come from below but is in itself a product of articulation and problematization of life under certain conditions. Social movements are always the handiwork of a small group for whom certain conditions become *the* issue. What leads up to a social movement is not necessarily an injustice, but the way a perceived injustice is socially and politically deciphered and articulated to influence those who suffer from this injustice to address it. I appreciate Munck's transformationalist approach, but I am also aware that gender, race, and class inequalities — however stereotypical these categories have become in our current practice of the social sciences — have not *in and by themselves* led, and will not lead, to any social movements, properly speaking. It is important that we uphold the conceptual difference between rebellion and protest, on the one hand, and social movements, on the other. While never clearly distinct in actuality, it is a social movement that will pave the way for lasting and universal social change. Unlike the case of protest movements, social movements' relationship to the perceived injustices is always socially and politically mediated. Thus a social movement tends to create a cultural ground for thinking and acting. Without such cultural disposition, brought about by social movements, resistance will not become socially perceivable and therefore action will not take place in a viable, enduring, and socially consequential way.

Global Citizens

Marjorie Mayo's *Global Citizens* looks at how social movements challenge, and are challenged by, the phenomenon of globalization. As such, the point of departure of Mayo's work is Munck's end-point. The book "sets out to explore the context for anti-globalization movements and their potential implications for active global citizenship, for social justice, human rights and social transformation based upon new forms of solidarity between North and South." (5) It proposes that during the past decade or so there has been an "emergence of global citizen action," which has proved a key factor in the "global associational revolution" (1) despite the absence

of a "global community." (5) In the next ten chapters, Mayo sets herself the task of identifying the main characteristics and trajectories of the global social movement.

The first chapter is dedicated to setting the stage for the future discussions. Pointing out that globalization is a contested notion, she situates the current trend toward globalization as the long-term handiwork of capitalism and transnational corporations that comprise half of the world's economy. (17) The neo-liberal ideological victory over the liberal welfare state since the 1980s onwards has paved the way for the evermore aggressive expansion of neo-liberal economic policies around the world. As a result, the disturbing fact of disparity in today's capitalist globalization is that the richest quintile of the world population shares 82 per cent of world income, while the poorest quintile shares a puny 1.4 per cent of world income. (21)

Mayo refers to Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* (1992) as an interstitial work that celebrates, with the fall of the Soviet bloc, the ultimate victory of the free-market economy and liberal democracy, leading up to a new world order. (35) The traditional Left's response to this ideological shift only showed how out of sync the Left has become. On the other hand, a certain strand of social democracy advocated a "third way" perspective that prescribed "a dose of human rights" while surrendering to the neo-liberal policies. (36) The encroachment of neo-liberal policies over the welfare rights and provisions in western democracies has caused a conflict between the rights of the citizens, indeed what defines citizenship, and the (de)regulatory practices and free-trade pacts of transnational bodies. (38) Such a displacement of the issue of rights has brought to the fore the role of international or regional bodies such as the UN or the European Parliament in dealing with the problem of rights in the age of globalization. (39) The inability of representative democracy to deal with the issues of rights and citizenship has yielded alternative visions of democracy which Mayo indexes in some detail in Chapter 2. She identifies civil society as the "key site of struggle, particularly ... when it comes to the battle of ideas about capitalism and the extent to which it may even be feasible to consider alternatives to social transformation." (46)

In bringing social movements into the picture Mayo begins with the distinction between the two bodies of social movements theory — resource mobilization theory [RMT] and new social movements theory [NSM] — in order to enable a "cross-fertilization, drawing upon the insights from both approaches." (53) The chapter, then, is mainly an exposition of the two schools of social movements theory, their contributions as well as shortcomings. As an American school, resource mobilization works out a sociology of social movements based on the rational choice model and as such generally views the ebbs and flows of social movements in terms of the rational, calculative actor's evaluation of the costs and gains involved in the process of mobilizing resources for a certain social demand. The new social movements, a European school, views social movements in terms of identity-formation and identity-claims and as such situates them on the cultural terrain

in the post-industrial society where there are competing discourses of modernity and where the cultural "historicity" of society (as French sociologist Alain Touraine called it) is to be decided. Mayo also uses the concept of "social movements organizations" in order to stress the importance of the existing organizations (her examples include Amnesty International and the Friends of the Earth in England) for the perpetuation of social movements' causes. These movement organizations rely on the membership of middle-class people and professionals from whom they receive contributions in various capacities. (71) With the discussion of the new social movements, naturally, there comes the issue whether the distinction between the new and "old" social movements — that is, class politics based on the centrality of working-class agency — is a valid one. But as Mayo points out, the distinction between the "old" and the "new" remains a problematic one (74): there were "new" social movements in the 19th century, while working-class politics today is not entirely outdated.

But Mayo's view of the potential forces that could challenge the globalization of capitalism (I will discuss the issue later) is more based on ideological favouritism and wishful thinking than on an impartial and arduous investigation. "Globalization ... brings increasing competition between workers. Paradoxically, however, it is also potentially bringing them closer together." (82) And what is her evidence? Well, first there is an equally unsupported assertion by Munck, following disparate examples that range from the AFL-CLO's new agenda of active recruiting of minorities, cooperative movements, an Indian Women's network, and others of this ilk. (83-85) None of the examples she provides is either self-evident or supports her earlier assertion that globalization also potentiates solidarity. In the end, she argues for a strange advocacy of "social movement unionism" that bridges the gap between the old and new social movements. (90)

Chapter 6 makes a compelling case for the communication of knowledge across localities. Such communication is essential for the creation of solidarity and an anti-globalization movement. It is a process of "learning from experience" in which the "local people ... become experts for each other internationally as well as locally." (112) Nowhere is such a trade of knowledge across cultures and localities better communicated than in social movements. As such, social movement participation is indeed an educational process. (114) It is no surprise, then, that international issue-specific networks form around the transmission of, and reflection on, experiences. (116) Truly, an important feature of the anti-globalization movement is direct involvement in issues that formerly were handled by the state or other formal institutions without citizen input. Thus, the anti-globalization movement turns out to be a democratization movement. Activist networks, Mayo rightly observes, are the political parties of our day, as they especially gain weight and influence in our present world where decisions are made by transnational bodies. (133) By way of exemplifying the points made thus far, the next two chapters discuss the issues of gender and education. Similar to Munck, Mayo points out that globalization has

particularly situated women in vulnerable positions — from underpaid labour to physical and sexual abuses. (134) Unfortunately, though, the chapter continues by offering textbook style surveys of feminist contributions to the issue of development (Women in Development, Women and Development, and Gender and Development approaches), before settling for a case study of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era [DAWN]. A similar approach is employed with respect to the issue of education and the right of children to public schools in Chapter 8.

Jubilee 2000, "mobilization for debt relief," brings home the discussions of the book and stands as a case study of an internationalist anti-globalization movement. "Jubilee 2000 had mobilized people of all faiths and people of no faith, academics, pop stars, trade unionists and businessmen, sportspeople and artists, young and old, black and while, organizing together on a global scale." (172) In the UK alone, the Jubilee Coalition comprised "110 organizations as members and there were, in addition, sixty-nine coalitions worldwide." (174) In this concerted, world-wide effort for the elimination of Third World debt, the NGOs functioned as social movement organizations, soliciting agreements between North and South activist networks and movements. (178) A significant aspect of Jubilee 2000 was its success in recruiting from new actors of a new generation and from the immigrants. (181) The coalition, then, also functioned as a means of, as Paulo Freire coined it, "conscientization." (189) This leads to the conclusion of the book about the real possibility of staging a world-wide movement of all walks of life against the rampant globalization of capitalism.

Among its contributions, there is one thing to appreciate about Mayo's book: the theoretical tendency of her work shows indeed the lack of proper theoretical frameworks regarding anti-globalization social movements (see, for instance, page 95). In the absence of theories that deal with this recent phenomenon, she appeals to the theories of older or new social movements, something that many other authors have ended up doing. The anti-globalization social movements have not yet been connected to theories with the status or originality of, say, those of Alain Touraine, Alberto Melucci, or Ernesto Laclau on the new social movements. Here we have the age-old issue of life's originality appearing to us as pressing the facts that precede any theorization about them.

Acknowledging this theoretical shortcoming, of course, means that in the theoretical works pertaining to the anti-globalization social movements we usually end up running into problems because we are using theoretical devices that are not quite fit for the analysis of the matter at hand. This is why the distinction between older social movements and the new social movements — as well as her attempt at identifying their points of convergence — runs throughout Mayo's study. Facing the irreducible plurality of our age, she tries to avail herself of the notion of identity-claim as a sign of resistance (NSM theories) as well as the agency of the working class or the Third World disenfranchised (older social movements theories). In so doing, I think, she proposes wishful thinking. Her zealous search for an identifiable

historical "agency" leads her to mistake the *factuality* of the working class under global capitalism for the *agency* of the working class. In other words, a theme that runs through the work — I must add, factually and theoretically unsustained — is that she thinks since globalization leads to the "proletarianization" of ever more sectors of societies in the First and Third Worlds, it will also necessarily lead to the organization of resistance amongst the working class everywhere. Mayo asserts unwarrantedly that far from "fading away" (Manuel Castells), "the labour movement's potential base had grown, as the workforce in manufacturing distribution and services had expanded — not to mention the potential for developing support among those in the informal sector, globally." (74) Yes, the potential base of labour has expanded, but so what? For one thing, we know that today's labour movement in the West (and especially in the Anglo-American tradition) is generally only a ghost of what it used to be, thanks to Gomperism and the transformation of the labour movement into business syndicates. But elsewhere in the world too, despite frequent rebellions of the working poor against local and international policies, we cannot even come close to perceiving something that would resemble agency. We have well-known cases like Porto Alegre or Chiapas where the creative resistance of the poor and locals have offered humanity new models for resistance. But nowhere do we find the promise of agency for which she perceives the form of "international unionism." (115) Just to make sure that her much-coveted agency is revived, at least theoretically, in this time of global capitalism, she avails herself of the NSM theories: "rather than seeing them as replacing working-class struggles, new social movements could be seen as 'part of the working class'." (75) I am not too sure, though, if her attempt at gathering all potential actors together under the banner of an anti-globalization unionist movement is in actuality supportable or sustainable. She is well aware of how historically the union movement in the West belittled minorities and women, but she still keeps her faith. The "labour movement has more recently been making significant moves to address racism and to build a more inclusive, more effective progressive movement." (75) That is why "the politics of identity and culture needed to be related to, rather than opposed to, the politics of class." (76) Her reductive view of NSMs allows her to try to subsume NSMs under the banner of the anti-globalization movement, which is fine, but such a view suggests that she has missed the fact that by definition NSMs are intentionally dispersed and suspicious of all universal struggles. Specific older and new social movements, if we can ever clearly uphold such a distinction, may converge on specific issues (see her example on page 174), but there is great doubt that such a phenomenon will transform into a sustained, universal, worldwide anti-globalization social movement modeled after labour unionism. Well, unless we wish to see it that way.

Identity, Place, Knowledge

In *Identity, Place, Knowledge*, Janet Conway looks at the intersection between global capitalism and local social activism in the Metro Network for Social Justice [MNSJ] in 1990's Toronto. Her study, then, is a configuration of the famous slogan, "think globally, act locally." Conway identifies the anti-globalization movement as a "'movement of movements' with diverse roots" (2) and lists a number of examples of such movements from India to Seattle and Chiapas. The key argument in her work is that social movements are sources of knowledge, always contextual, (9) and must be studied as such. (8) She spends a few pages to quickly go through the various theories of social movements — from NSMs, to the works of Manuel Castells and Ulrich Beck — but she mainly treats the theoretical part without much depth. However, the three guiding concepts of this study — identity, place, and knowledge — appear in the next three chapters to provide the analytical framework for the case study, the MNSJ.

Drawing on the work of Melucci, Conway argues that while "social movements signal profound shifts in the social reality and provoke new analytical, theoretical and political questions," they "are also sites of practical experimentation and innovation and of the production of new knowledges that respond to the crises they signal and the question they provoke." (21) That said, and after a survey of NSM theories, she holds identity-politics as what is "new" in NSMs but also makes the distinction between identity as a "*thing* (e.g., gender or race) — as distinct from class (another thing)" and identity as a "*process.*" (25) This is important because it is through the concept of social movement as collective identity formation (26) that one can perceive social movements as sites of production of knowledge that are culturally specific. (33) Social movements are also contextually specific in that they are bound by a place. (35) It is this connection to time and place that enables social movements to link identity to knowledge. Conway refers to David Harvey — an originator of the postmodern concept of space — who finds "anticapitalist resistances everywhere, including in localized social movements." (36) The relationship between identity and place is, however, unfixed (37) and this is how global issues instigate local resistances. Specifically, as regards MNSJ, Conway seeks out ways to analyse movement in urban settings. Urbanization itself is a result of globalization (41); hence urban movements are to be distinguished from social movements in general. (47) Finally, it is through the existential epistemologies (56) motivating social movements that she finds the latter as the sites of production of knowledge. In this respect, social movement knowledges function at the different levels of tacit knowledge, the "dialectical relationship between action and reflection," and knowledge production. (57) Conway's approach to knowledge is enabled by the New Left, feminist standpoint theory, and Paolo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed.

These conceptual preparations lead the way, in the next five chapters, to the author's description and analysis of the MNSJ, whose origins go back to1991. The

MNSJ is based in Toronto — a mega-city of the neo-liberal age, a city greatly affected by the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and neo-liberal cuts to social services. The MNSJ therefore emerged in response to the cuts and their adverse effects on the poor by bringing together a "mix of social agency staff, housing and antipoverty activists, people on welfare, church people and others" which formed an ad hoc coalition named FightBack Metro!, (79) a progressive municipal movement. The MNSJ was thus a response to the domino effects of the global neo-liberal policies at the municipal level. (158) It was not until October 1992 that sufficient momentum existed for a movement on the "national" level, reflecting the need for permanence, with Action Canada Network [ACN] and the Canadian Labour Congress [CLC] leading the way. (116) In five years, the organization "grew from 30 to almost 250 member organizations, with an activist base fluctuating between 50 and 100 persons." (124) What is interesting, though, is that the "majority of activists in the MNSJ were not poor, although some were on welfare or unemployed. Most were university-educated." (69) Conway succeeds in documenting the dilemmas and problems that arise from the diversity of activists in MNSJ. (131, 136) In the end, she observes, the MNSJ was "heir to the white, English Canadian left." (137)

Although the MNSJ originates with protest activism, its significance, as Conway asserts, lies in its success in negotiating "the tension between the short-term, urgent and immediate, and the longer term orientations to community development, base building and cultural transformation." (198) The MNSJ also succeeded, through its immense amount of published literature, in educating the public about the links between local policies, national politics, and global economic trends. (199)

Conway uses this case study to reflect on the crisis of leftist politics today. She observes: "Reflecting on the crisis of the left, the sorry state of the movement and the poverty of activism in general provoked thinking about other dimensions of economic and political literacy work, specifically the need among activists for more advanced intellectual work." (216) The disconnect between university and activism has been an impediment to the "education of the educator"; as such the need for connecting analytical work with activism is something that must be addressed in a more systematic and institutional way. In the end, Conway proposes that a new form of political activism is in the formation, and as we saw in her work on the MNSJ, it involves the movements that make up a new movement. Echoing the works of new social movement theorists, and especially Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), she characterizes this movement as coalitional, popular, participatory, forming around a common opposition while suspicious of the universals, and building "a permanent, broad-based, democratic and reflexive organization," (247) which would have a decentering effect on the state and its institutions. (247-248) The new movement has served, as

she rightly observes, to educate the younger generation about globalization and its ill effects on various aspects of social life. (252)

Conway offers an original study of an urban social movement by situating it in the nexus of the local and the global. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this book is not its extensive research but its theoretical eclecticism. Conway refuses to subsume the case she studies under pre-given theoretical packages and by so doing avoids the pitfall of ignoring or over-interpreting the facts that do not conform to the mandates of theory. While such refusal is commendable, as mentioned, it has led to an unjustified theoretical eclecticism. And yet such eclecticism indicates something important about the issue of globalization: that the lively power of the anti-globalization movement has left theories behind, as has always been the case with social developments; yet many works present the issues as if theory must precede life. Conway's bricolage of various approaches demonstrates the lack of a proper theory for the analysis of anti-globalization movement. Nevertheless, she identifies the new anti-globalization movements such as the MNSJ in continuity with the NSMs and tries to address the issue of a theoretical vacuum, without properly acknowledging it, by using the frame of "movement of the movements." "The politics of the new social movements are premised on the power and creativity of humans and their capacities and desires for self-activity, self-organizing, and democratic self-management.... Democracy is situated communal practice and process, always incomplete and dependent upon people's participation. Democratic communities are and need to be plural, diverse, overlapping and mutually informative." (259) The main reason for such identification is the fact of pluralism, which "is absolutely central to the generative powers of the new social movements and to the political power being exercised in their global convergence." (263) Conway also identifies democratization as the imaginary of this new movement: "Central to the new democratic imaginary is a new epistemological stance captured in the Zapatista slogan 'Walk forward questioning'." (260) The points are well taken.

New Modes of Activism

As the (self-acclaimed) movement with exclusive monopoly in representing and in articulating the experiences of labour in the age of capitalism, the Left may be dead, but the experiences of alienated labour and activism are not. While activism is existential, the Left is ideological. So be it. In understanding the modes of activism that respond to the rampant waves of globalization of capitalism, one must be aware, and uphold, this distinction, which enables us to understand that while the issues of labour have not gone away, the modes of articulation of such issues have changed dramatically. No movement can any longer claim monopoly over representation of certain constituents. Moreover, the issues arising from globalization of capitalism pertain to more than just the working people. Hence the irreducible plurality of the responses to global capitalism — configured by the actors in the field in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, aboriginality, municipal politics, regional poli-

tics, and political and social innovations. This pluralism should not be treated as an intellectual fad, or commitment to liberal political correctness, but taken as a sociological fact. Such pluralism has always existed, and we would have been able to see it with clarity decades earlier, had it not been for the umbrella effect of the ideological Left, which while trying to hide or trivialize the diverse responses to capitalism, interestingly preserved the labour movement in face of unrelenting capitalist assaults to dismantle it.

But are the globalization of capitalism and the anti-globalization social movements new? Certainly not, although at our historical conjuncture, they both have emerged with the faces that represent them — faces that, however, do remain elusive. There is no convenient way to characterize global capitalism and its many manifestations, although we can certainly agree on its general features. The same is true about the modes of activism around the world that seen to challenge the effects of globalization, mostly on the local, regional, or national levels. What will become of these movements certainly does not depend on any revolutionary cookbook — since this "revolution" follows no blueprint — but on the sobriety and creativity of the actors, like those in Porto Alegre or Chiapas.

That is why, in my judgement, understanding the movements that challenge globalization as reactive — that is, in reaction to the diminishing role of the welfare state — does a disservice to the potentials of such movements. Set aside the rhetoric of justice and socialism in this view and what you end up seeing is the lament for the good old liberal welfare state and a cry to preserve the Keynsian status quo in the face of vehement forces of neo-liberal capitalism that aim at dismantling every form of social regulation in favour of so-called free-market self-regulation. This view is immobilized by its idealizing retrospection and does not have the capacity to challenge the discourses of privatization, national deficit, free-market economy, and the like that have grown global because they have become hegemonic on all international, national, and regional levels.

As a movement without blueprints, it remains to be seen how the creativity of the human mind will challenge the rampant assault of global capitalism, an old phenomenon that has reached heightened levels in our time. Blueprints give us a sense of inner security, but never has human action *in actuality* followed any pre-existing rules or models. From what I can gather, looking into the movements around the world, we have no shortage of creative responses to global capitalism. Certainly, the ways social movements challenge globalization are as varied and diverse as the phenomenon itself. Perhaps it is through cognizance that action does not follow preconceived guidelines that we can begin to perceive of the theoretical foundations for understanding the issue of social movements challenging global capitalism.